



State Senator

August 5, 2009

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Senate Republican legislation promotes Michigan tourism

A recently introduced Senate Republican measure is designed to boost the state's travel and recreation by identifying tourist attractions on highway signs.

Senate Bill 606 would enable the Michigan Department of Transportation to create a "tourist attraction" category as part of the state's Logo Signing program. Currently four categories are included on logo signs: motor fuels, food, lodging and camping.

The legislation builds upon a bill enacted in 2006 that capped the number of billboards. SB 606 is a further effort to help preserve Michigan's scenic vistas by promoting the use of existing directional signs, which would further decrease the need for new billboards.

The bill would also help repair roads and bridges through sign revenues from the lease fees for the program. The revenues would be directed to the state trunkline fund, used to repair state highways and interstates.

The sites designated as tourist attractions under the measure would include historic, cultural, scientific, educational, religious, or agricultural sites; areas of natural beauty; areas naturally suited for outdoor or indoor recreation; and shopping malls or shopping areas.

Mortgage loan officer licensing requirements bills signed into law

The governor recently signed a bipartisan legislative package that will strengthen existing requirements for loan officers in Michigan.

Protecting homeowners from the few bad actors who conduct fraudulent mortgage transactions in Michigan remains a top priority for Senate Republicans, who led the effort to enact mortgage loan officer requirements in Michigan last session.

The new laws build upon those requirements, bring the state in line with recent federal guidelines, and strengthen the protective measures by creating a national registration system for loan officers.

Senate Bill 462, now Public Act 75 of 2009, adds federal requirements to those already established in Michigan law for individuals who offer or negotiate terms for a mortgage loan.

The requirements include pre-licensing education and testing, as well as fingerprinting and background checks under the national Secure and Fair Enforcement Mortgage Licensing Act of 2008. Loan originators will also be required to register through the Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System and Registry.

The federal requirements and licensing system will help ensure accountability and responsibility in the mortgage industry. With the registry in place, homeowners can access a loan officer's employment history to make sure their representative is qualified to conduct loan transactions.

Public Acts 76-78 of 2009 revise other state laws dealing with mortgage and financial services. Mortgage loan originators must be licensed under the new system by July 31, 2010.

Senate Republican tax incentive transparency bill approved by House panel

The need for accountability and transparency in the business tax incentive process was emphasized by Senate Republicans to the House New Economy and Quality of Life Committee. The panel then approved a Senate transparency bill and sent it to the full House for consideration.

Senate Bill 71 would increase the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) reporting requirements for MEGA tax credits by requiring the reports to include the actual number of jobs created and the actual value of the MEGA tax credits claimed. The measure was unanimously approved by the Senate on Feb. 12.

When the state is facing a more than \$1.7 billion deficit and lawmakers are asking everyone to sacrifice, the public must be assured the state is spending taxpayer dollars wisely and effectively.

According to the nonpartisan Senate Fiscal Agency, less than half of the approved MEGA credits actually come to fruition with the credit being claimed.

As Michigan continues to have the nation's highest employment rate, Senate Republicans remain firm that increased transparency and accountability is vital to ensure the state gets a better return on its investment.

Contact information

Thank you for your interest in our current state issues. If you would like to receive future legislative updates via e-mail, or have any questions or concerns, please contact my office at sen22@senate.michigan.gov or by calling 800-516-0026. You can also visit me in my Lansing office S-132 State Capitol Building Lansing, Michigan.

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